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Problems of Administration in a Downtown Church

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PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION IN A DOWNTOWN CHURCH

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the outgrowth of a vicarage year in Concordia Lutheran Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. This congregation is situated in a run-down area in the heart of the city and has many problems which are unique to a congregation in this situation, as well as many normal problems which are heightened by the downtown situation.

The intent of this thesis is to outline the many problems which exist, on the basis of personal experience and of the limited written material extant from 1933 to the present date. Possible solutions have been included inasmuch as they have been offered in the course of research, and inasmuch as definite solutions can be offered for the problems.

Research has been limited to the materials available in the publications and periodicals at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and publications obtained through the courtesy of Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis.

The writer is indebted to the members of the Practical Department of Concordia Seminary for the kindly assistance which they offered, and to his wife and parents for their constant encouragement.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN CHURCH

> In St. Louis, as in many American cities, huge churches sit awkwardly in downtown areas, hemmed in by big office buildings or slums, attempting to maintain a program for the remaining supporters on the outskirts of town. Around such churches are concentrated our worst urban ills--poor housing, lack of recreational facilities, high birth- and death-rates, delinquency, unemployment, low wages.[1]

The churches situated in such areas are churches that once ministered to the aristocracy of the city, in neighborhoods that were at one time outstanding for their cleanliness and fine homes. In Cincinnati, for example, many members recall with pride how their mothers and grandmothers were accustomed to scrub the sidewalks in front of their homes around the church in the downtown area at least once a week. Now, as in many downtown areas, these once proud residences show unmistakable signs of age and decay.

> They are dingy, having long since lost all of the original paint. Porches and stairways are sagging, and broken windows with rags stuffed in the openings may occasionally be seen. Zigzag cracks show in some of the brick walls. Fences stand awry. An abandoned and tottering building, with broken windows and much of the woodwork pulled off for use in local cookstoves, adds to the general shabby appearance of the neighborhood. The much-used streets are covered with dust and litter, which is blown up in the face of the passerby with each gust of wind. Garbage accumulates in the alleys, and, since much of it is not kept in cans, it is scattered still farther by rats and stray dogs. In the hot weather

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[1] Kenneth Underwood, Christianity Where You Live (New York: Friendship Press, c.1945), p. 107.

> inadequate garbage collection results in a heavy smell of decayed food hanging over the alleys and rear yards.
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> Many of the structures have been subdivided, and basements and attics are utilized for living space. Commonly a family of three or four lives in a two-room "housekeeping apartment", the larger room serving as kitchen, dining and living room, and at night as bedroom. Cooking facilities may be a gas plate in one corner of the room, or perhaps an old range used not only for cooking, but also in winter as the sole source of heat. Many dwelling units have no running water, and toilet facilities are shared with two to six other families.[2]

The downtown community is by no means the most pleasant and inviting atmosphere in which one might labor; nor is it an easy place in which to carry on religious activities.

> This is a fact attested to by scores of experienced pastors. Attempts to conduct downtown religious work in the pattern of a traditional neighborhood church have again and again resulted in failure.[3]

But these areas, with their thousands upon thousands of congested souls, present a real challenge to us, a challenge which demands the development of new attitudes, methods, outlooks and techniques.

> Our past, predominantly rural, has developed for us attitudes, methods, outlooks and techniques which were designed to meet the requirements of that day of rural work and linguistic, nationalistic isolation. That day is past. Once again as in the days of Paul the city rises to claim the place of first importance.[4]

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[2]Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1949), p. 84.

[3]Frederick A. Shippey, Church Work In The City (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1952), p. 95.

[4]O. A. Geiseman, "The Urban Church", American Lutheran, XVIII (January, 1935).

We are changing from a rural to an urban church and

> if it be true that the Church of Jesus Christ is to reach the masses with the saving Gospel . . . then we must soon begin to realize that with more than half the population of our country already concentrated in larger or smaller urban communities it will and unavoidably must be our task to develop beyond all else the urban church.[5]

According to the census of 1930 the population of the metropolitan districts of the United States is nearly 45 per cent of the total population of the United States.[6] Within most of these metropolitan districts the greatest percentage of the population inhabits the immediate downtown area of the city. Central Methodist Episcopal Church of Detroit is an excellent example of a church located very conveniently in the midst of such a densely populated area. This church is located approximately one mile from the edge of the city which is bounded by the Detroit River. "Within one mile of the church lives a population of approximately 95,000 people.[7] Thus the opportunities for any church similarly located become most apparent. According to sociologists it is even more than an opportunity; it is an obligation. ". . . The consensus of opinion on the part of sociologists is that the church must spend more time attempting to develop

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Samuel C. Kincheloe, The American City And Its Church (New York: Friendship Press, c.1938), pp. 10 f.

[7]H. Paul Douglass, The Church In The Changing City (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1927), p. 156.

responsibility toward its parish--a term which has geographical connotations."[8]

> There is no reason to believe that Protestantism will in the foreseeable future be stripped of the downtown church opportunity. Thousands of people continue to reside at the heart of the city, and where the population is, there should the church be also.[9]

> In the downtown districts . . . the church has its greatest opportunity of influencing the whole life of the city. A downtown church "bearing witness to the supremacy of religion in human affairs wins the transient city dweller to God and attaches church members who are coming to the city, whose church relation and religious affiliation may not be vital enough to lead them at once into a city church, and who may find the city strange and difficult."[10]

Regardless of their low income, their habits of living, the color of their skin, their illiteracy or their background, they are souls to be won for Christ.

> A soul is a soul, immortal and blood-bought, whether it habitates in the "better sections" or in the smoke and grime of the slums. There are no "better class of people" in the Holy Christian Church. They are all included in "the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy people." The Gospel is for all people. Some of us sorely need the reminder which the Spirit of Missions gives us in James 2:1-6.[11]

The Church has a ministry to fulfill to many different types of people. It can not neglect one in preference to others.

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[8]Vernon Roy Schreiber, "The Urban Church in a Transition Community", (Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1949).

[9]Shippey, op. cit., p. 93.

[10]Wyndham B. Blanton, The Making of a Downtown Church (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, c.1945), p. 461.

[11]F. A. Hertwig, "Must The Downtown Church Die?", Today, I (February, 1946).

There is the gate leading to the king's palace, suggesting the relationship of the church to the dominant political and economic power of the world. On the other hand, there is the gate to "the other city" where the mass of humanity dwells amid squalor, suggesting the relationship of the church to deep human need. To which door does the church pay the most attention--that leading to the seats of the mighty, or that through which it may hear the still sad music of humanity? . . . Look at the Lutheran church in our country. It has been a pioneering church. But that area of our church is definitely gone. The children and the grandchildren of the pioneers today are the more or less comfortably situated middle class, if not the socially elite. Is our church today satisfied to minister to these groups and neglecting the door that leads to "the other city?"

Certain considerations disturb us and make us uneasy. Urban communities change, they become depressed areas, and our congregations move out. Is there no service we can render to those who move in? On the road are thousands of Okies and Arkies and other dispossessed. We realize that a ministry to homeless groups poses almost insuperable problems. But have we faced our responsibility and are we at least trying to discharge it? Economic changes and shifts are going on in our country and noone can predict what conditions our children will find. But we will venture the assertion that the gate to "the other city" will become increasingly important and lead to ever larger numbers. And our church dare not overlook it.[12]

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[12]"The Door to 'The Other City'", American Lutheran, XXIII (June, 1940).

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS IN RETAINING AN ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

Fundamental to a successful ministry in a downtown church in any city is that the pastor have a proper attitude to the multiplicity of tasks which confront him. He cannot begin to develop successful methods and techniques to cope with the problems confronting him unless he fully realizes the vast opportunities and obligations which a ministry of this type presents, and is determined to experiment creatively with various types of programs. The pastor in a downtown church who overlooks the mass of humanity on his doorstep and devotes all of his time and attention to those old members who have moved out into the suburbs has considerably diminished his administrative problems, although he may have even greater problems with his conscience. The pastor, however, who can visualize the opportunities confronting him, who is seriously striving to integrate a dual constituency, and who makes use of every opportunity to furthur develop a zealous missionary spirit in his members and enlist their aid and cooperation in the downtown area--that pastor has many problems to overcome.

The pastor of any one of our large city congregations located in a densely populated downtown area knows that a large percentage of the teeming community drifting by his door has no church connection. But frequently he is helpless

to do as much as he would like about it. Frequently the men who have been called to these older congregations are men with a good deal of experience and many years in the ministry behind them. As such they have gained a synod-wide reputation, and are frequently called upon to devote their time and energies to synodical duties as well as to the activities of their own parish, a fact which makes it all the more difficult to keep up with the mission opportunities at their doorstep.[1] Concordia congregation of Cincinnati has experienced this in the case of at least two pastors. The Rev. G. Christian Barth accepted the call of this congregation in 1934; he had been the President of Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1941 Synod elected him as one of its Vice-Presidents.

> Due to the additional amount of work imposed upon him by this office and the corresponding shortage of time to devote to his congregation it was resolved, in accordance with the provision made by Synod, to call an assistant pastor to carry on the huge amount of work necessary to be done at Concordia.[2]

In 1947 the Rev. Herbert Berner was installed as pastor of the congregation. Since that time he has served as a member of Synod's Foreign Mission Board and as First Vice-president of the Central District.

Even the location of the parsonage presents an unusual

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[1] O. H. Schmidt, "An Assistant to the Pastor", American Lutheran, XXII (July, 1939).

[2] "A Century of Grace", (Unpublished brief history of Concordia Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio: 1949).

problem to the administration of the downtown church. If the pastor lives right in the vicinity of the church "as he must do if he is to identify himself with the people, he subjects his wife and children to all of the physical and social hazards and discomforts which characterize the area."[3] If the parsonage is located at some distance from the church in a higher class residential area the pastor can expect to have even greater difficulty communicating with the people in the run-down neighborhood of the church, and convincing them of his sincere and noble intentions toward them. "City dwellers . . . have learned to be wary of strangers and are suspicious of any unrecognized caller."[4] The experience of the writer last year was that he was frequently questioned by these people regarding his residence. When they learned that he did not live in the immediate vicinity of the church all rapport was frequently destroyed, he was not regarded as "one of their own," and further communication was exceedingly more difficult. The location of the parsonage also presents a problem with regard to the existing membership. If the pastor resides in one of the suburban residential sections in which perhaps the greater portion of the membership resides, he will undoubtedly find that this location facilitates his ministry to these people. At the same time

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[3]Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1949), p. 98.

[4]Ibid., p. 183.

he may have to contend with the hurt feelings of members who for one reason or another have had to continue to dwell in the downtown area, and who now feel slighted when their pastor is not right at hand to serve them.

The wide dispersion of the parishioners is another factor which poses a serious problem for the pastor in a downtown church. While a pastor in a normal situation may find it difficult to carry out a planned parish visitation program and visit in the homes of his members once or twice a year, this problem is accentuated for the pastor in the downtown church. In the case of Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Detroit, "scarcely 12 per cent of its constituency lives within a mile of the church, while two-thirds live over three miles away and more constituents live over five miles away than in any nearer mile zone."[5] Such a widely dispersed parish makes pastoral calling unusually difficult "with excessive time consumed in getting from one home to another. Thus it is understandable that the pastor of a downtown church frequently limits visitation work primarily to calls with a purpose."[6] When he considers the priceless amount of time and energy that goes into each call, he must reduce casual visitations to a minimum and make every call count.

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[5]H. Paul Douglass, The Church in the Changing City (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1927), p. 151.

[6]Frederick A. Shippey, Church Work in the City (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1952), p. 112.

Thus calls that result in a mere "not at home" note on his record must also be eliminated as much as possible. With the pastor's time at a high premium every such notation is evidence of wasted time, especially if he has had to travel five or eight miles to make the call.

Frequently the pastor may also find it the case that the members living in the downtown area in poorer conditions do not welcome visitations in their home, but would prefer to come to him in his office with their problems because they are embarrassed by their living conditions. "This fact suggests that the pastor of a downtown church will do well to set aside and announce certain hours during the week for interviews."[7] This, however, poses another problem for the pastor in the proper apportionment of his time.

> Many downtown churches maintain an extensive counseling program. If permitted, interview work would consume all of the pastor's time. Hardly a week end goes by but an additional covey of individuals in need of personal help seek appointments. An unending procession of youth, young adults, parents and older people turns in here for guidance. This is a conspicuous feature of downtown religious work and properly lays claim to the pastor's time and energy.[8]

No matter how efficient he may be, no pastor can attempt to operate as a "lone wolf" to meet the many situations

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[7]Wm. M. Stieve, "Serving Souls Through the Downtown Church", Today, III (October, 1948).

[8]Shippey, op. cit., p. 113.

which confront him in his parish.[9] He must have the support of his laymen, and that is not always easy to achieve. Often what is needed is not so much a large number of workers, but workers whose spirit and attitude towards work in the downtown church has been developed to the point where they can perform an outstanding service to their church. Often when "denominations are prone to neglect or abandon low-income and/or depressed urban territories since church work proves too difficult or too unrewarding,"[10] it is because of pressure exerted upon pastors or denominational officials by laymen who are traveling great distances from suburban homes to attend the downtown church of their youthful years. Most research specialists agree that "a city church can be too small to be effective."[11] Thus it becomes vitally important for the pastor to strive to develop a spirit of loyalty in the members so that they will "identify themselves intelligently with community problems and participate in the search for solutions."[12] "The basic problem is not 'recruiting'; it is a deepening of the spiritual life of the local church . . . until the quality of that life will impel young

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[9]George C. Koehler, "The Church in Our Changing Order", American Lutheran, XX (September, 1937).

[10]Shippey, op. cit., p. 173.

[11]Ibid., p. 24.

[12]Ibid., p. 104.

idealists to serve the church."[13] After having served approximately six years as the pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in downtown Cincinnati, Dr. O. H. Schmidt wrote the following article which aptly illustrates the tendency for the membership of the downtown church:

> We have in our country quite a number of older downtown churches, with few of their members now living in the immediate vicinity of the church, but with their people scattered over a wide territory and most of them forced to travel quite a distance in order to reach the church. Obviously, there is a danger that a congregation in this position sinks into a rut, permits the whole life of the church to become a mere matter of routine, with its nerves more or less atrophied, with more and more of the members leaving or dying, and with the congregation merely shrugging their collective shoulder and sighing helplessly: "What can you expect: That's the trend: away from the heart of the city; that's the hard luck of the old congregation; what can you do about it?" and supinely and listlessly the splendid powers of such a congregation are permitted to be frittered away. There would then be nothing much of interest to attract and hold the members; no forward look; only decline; peaceful resignation; a sinking to sleep.
> And there is the great danger that with such a situation and with such an attitude the congregation will fail to see what should be obvious: that they are in a favorable strategic position to perform notable service. The danger is that with the old downtown church the people sink into a lethargic and dispirited resignation to what they imagine is inevitable decline, and then never see their opportunity for service, or make only spasmodic and half-hearted attempts at doing something about it.[14]

It is only in the face of great opposition, however, that the pastor will succeed in making his people see that "those good people who make every effort to stand by their old

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[13] Catharine Herzel, "Questions That Were Never Asked", Christian Century, LXVII (March 15, 1950).

[14] O. H. Schmidt, "The Case of the Old Downtown Church, American Lutheran, XVI (July, 1933).

mother church in time of need, who spend much time and money in commuting to and from the suburbs to reach the old church, are doing God a service thereby."[15]

One of the most common complaints voiced by members to explain why they do not participate in the activities of the church to a greater extent is that they have to travel abnormally long distances.[16] It matters little to the farmer whether he travels two or ten miles to church, on uncongested country roads; but it becomes a serious problem for the member of the downtown church when he has to wend his way through that many miles of city traffic several times a week to be active in the affairs of his church. Following is a case in point:

> "Four years ago . . . I thought nothing of driving five miles to attend an evening meeting of the deacons. Today it takes me at least fifteen minutes longer to fight my way through the traffic, and when I arrive the people attending the movie around the corner have taken all the parking space. I know I ought to be ashamed of letting a small inconvenience affect my loyalty to my church, but I must confess I sometimes have to push myself to make the trip through our congested streets." A man less firm in his convictions would have found plenty of excuse for slipping into the ranks of "lapsed" or twice-a-year church members.[17]

This problem becomes accentuated too as the colder winter weather ensues, roads become icy, and the frequently long

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[15]F. A. Hertwig, "Must the Downtown Church Die?", Today, I (February, 1946).

[16]Shippey, op. cit., p. 109.

[17]Truman B. Douglass, Mission To America (New York: Friendship Press, c.1951), p. 63.

walk from the parking space to the church is even less pleasant than usual.[18]

Off-the-street parking facilities are a definite asset for any downtown church.[19] A frequent excuse of members, especially older members, to explain their absence from services or other affairs of the church is that they regularly are forced to park at long distances from the church, and they have difficulty in walking. Some years ago Concordia congregation in Cincinnati considered the possibility of purchasing a half-block of apartment houses to the North of the church, destroying them, and using the area for parking space. While this might very adequately solve the problem, and perhaps even provide some revenue for the church during the week, the initial cost involved might make such a venture impossible. A more recent attempt to solve the parking problem for this congregation has been an arrangement made with the Queen City Chevrolet Company. This company has made a free parking lot available from 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. on Sundays for the members of this congregation.[20] This can be nothing more than a partial solution to the problem, however. While it will eliminate the usual search for parking space, those who make use of the lot will still

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[18]Murray H. Leiffer, City and Church in Transition (New York: Willett, Clark and Co., c.1938), p. 167.

[19]Shippey, op. cit., p. 217.

[20]"Parking Problem", (Unpublished Weekly News Bulletin, Concordia Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio: March 7, 1954).

have to walk more than three blocks to the church.

Another factor which seriously hinders the work of the downtown church is the poor street lighting which often is a part of the downtown neighborhood.

> Darkness on streets and highways is recognized as an important contributor to crimes of violence, juvenile delinquency, assault, auto thefts and burglaries. Because of this, dark streets and inadequate lighting are a definite influence on evening church congregations, a recent survey conducted by the Street and Traffic Safety Lighting Bureau reveals.
> Many people who are aware of the dangers of darkness hesitate attending night church functions, particularly those which involve the attendance of children and young people.[21]

This factor in a measure explains the hesitancy of women and teen-age girls to venture unescorted into the downtown area for any evening function of the church. Because of this the downtown church may have difficulty in maintaining a sizable Ladies' Aid, junior or senior choir, or young people's organization. Many men as well hesitate to attend the evening meetings and leave their cars unattended on the dimly lit streets because at one time or another they have experienced the loss of a tire, or their car has been broken into, or vandals have punctured their tires. It is not at all uncommon to encounter street fights, family squabbles, drunks or beggars on the streets around the church, all of which serve to discourage many of the members from coming into the neighborhood after dark.

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[21]Ralph Richman, "Church Council Chit-Chat", American Lutheran, XXXIV (May, 1951).

If the downtown congregation maintains a parochial school in the immediate vicinity of the church or within access of the people dwelling in the downtown area, the pastor may have additional problems to cope with. Frequently there will be families dwelling in the downtown area who, for one reason or another, do not want to send their children to the public school; and although they have no connection with the church, they will come and virtually beg that their children be admitted to the parochial school.[22] Perhaps they feel that their children do not receive adequate attention in the public schools; or they may resent the presence of negro children in the same school; or their children may have been unable to get along with a public school teacher or other children in the school. In many such cases it is most apparent that these children come, not because they are interested in the Word of God, but merely because they want to get away from the unfavorable conditions in the public schools.[23] Frequently these same people plead that they do not have sufficient income to pay the tuition which the school requires, or else they can pay but a small percentage of it. To take any sizable number of these children into the school will add thousands of dollars to a congregation's budget. "And many a congregation will revolt against taking

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22C. T. Schuknecht, "The Old School In A New Day", Today, I (October, 1946).

23Ibid., p. 16.

on this additional burden when it considers that no great financial return will ever be reaped, and many of the children might never become members of the particular congregation whose school they attend."[24] It thus becomes a difficult problem for the pastor to convince his members that they have an obligation also to these children whom Christ would have in His kingdom, and that the doors of our schools should remain open also for them.[25]

The church must also contend with the problem of transportation for the children of those members who have moved some distance away from the downtown church. Some congregations have purchased their own bus or busses and find this an adequate solution. Others who have at one time or another tried this have found it to be too great an expense, or else they have had difficulty in finding someone to drive the bus regularly. Some of these have then been able to make arrangements with the city transportation company and regularly charter busses at a weekly or monthly rate. Regardless of what is done, trivial problems are inevitable; there will always be some who feel the transportation charges are too high and others who are not satisfied with the route the bus takes.

In these rapidly changing neighborhoods the church experiences an abnormal membership change every year. While

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 15.

many of the older members still cling to the church in which they were baptized and confirmed, their children and adult confirmands often do not feel the same bonds of loyalty.[26] Roseville Methodist Episcopal Church of Newark, New Jersey, has experienced an annual turnover of leadership in some activities as high as 75 per cent. In one six year period, "out of 932 accessions, 928 dismissals took place."[27] An extensive survey would undoubtedly indicate a similar condition existing in most downtown churches. By way of comparision, Concordia Lutheran Church in Cincinnati gained 61 communicants by way of confirmation, transfer and profession of faith in 1952; and at the same time it lost 52 communicants by death, transfer and removal, and thus shows a net gain of but 9 communicants.[28] This high mobility rate in the downtown church may serve to cause a degree of tension between the downtown church and sister congregations in suburban communities.[29] With its membership so widely dispersed the downtown church has no fixed parish boundary lines. At the same time many people moving into the city's suburban areas will pass up the church in their neighborhood in favor of membership in the downtown church perhaps because they

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[26]Leiffer, op. cit., p. 98.

[27]H. Paul Douglass, op. cit., p. 98.

[28]"Parochial Report", (Unpublished Annual and Parochial Report, Concordia Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio: 1952), p. 3.

[29]Leiffer, op. cit., p. 194.

have friends there, or they have visited several churches and prefer this pastor, or they find the membership here friendlier. Especially if they have made an attempt to draw these people into their congregation, the danger exists that the neighborhood churches will resent what seems to be the superior drawing power of the downtown church.[30]

Frequently there is a tendency too for the outlying churches to shirk their duty in regard to the establishment of more congregations in developing areas of the city. The old downtown church has been the mother of many of them and is expected to be the mother of many more. She has the problem of gaining the support of the younger congregations which is so essentially necessary to carry on further mission work in a large city.[31] "No downtown church, however strong, can truly stand alone, nor can it provide adequate ministry for an entire city. Religious work should be shared with other units in an enlightened pattern of denominational teamwork."[32] But it is sometimes very difficult to enlighten the other congregations properly and get them to support the weakened mother church as she has supported them in years gone by.

> These old churches have given much blood and money to the new mission churches. They have become mothers and grandmothers. They have helped support children and

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[30] Shippey, op. cit., p. 109.

[31] Ibid., pp. 28 f.

[32] Ibid., p. 129.

> grandchildren. And now they have become old and weak. Grandma's children are prosperous. Everytime a new church is founded she is expected to, and does, give a liberal transfusion of blood and money. Of course, she is expected to set a good example to the young churches by continuing to raise her full share of the synodical and district budget.
> The youngsters are building and buying all sorts of things which the grandmother church could never afford. Do you blame her for catching the wanderlust in spite of her age? Ought not the church at large support these aged, help them, counsel with them, subsidize them with far greater care and devotion than the youngsters receive?[33]

The usual situation is quite to the contrary; the downtown church has a problem in making other congregations of the denomination in the same city, and the denomination as a whole, conscious of the acuteness of the changes they are experiencing.[34]

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[33]Hertwig, loc. cit.

[34]H. Paul Douglass, loc. cit.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS IN WINNING THE COMMUNITY

"Of the half of the nation's people who have no connection with any religious body, at least 90 per cent are living in places conveniently accessible to a Protestant church."[1] It is logical to proceed further and say that a great percentage of this group are concentrated in the downtown areas of our large cities. But downtown churches are

> drawing much of their membership from outlying districts of the urban area. But is this healthy? Is that good? The hypothesis of the author is that the church should primarily serve its community. There are people in the immediate environment of such churches . . . which need the Gospel as much as the wealthy suburbanites. There are people in their own community who can make just as good and profitable use of these physical church plants.[2]

> The downtown church should be concerned with those Christians who have lapsed from earlier confessions and connections--with homeless men permanently detached from family ties; with those young people of both sexes who have come to town for the first time and are separated from their families; with suburban residents who have developed a philosophy of individualism and a way of life that seeks new substitutes for religion; with the foreign-born and the children of the foreign-born.[3]

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[1]Truman B. Douglass, Mission to America (New York: Friendship Press, c.1951), p. 106.

[2]Marcus Lang, "The Communities and Church Progress of St. Louis Lutheran Churches", American Lutheran, XXIX (July, 1946).

[3]Wyndham B. Blanton, The Making of a Downtown Church, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, c.1945), p. 460.

If the church is adequately to serve all of these people and maintain itself as a vital redemptive agency it must make a study of the people about it[4] and be more than another urban institution which has no relation to its surrounding. "It must own a claim to existence other than that people of a certain sort have chosen to transport themselves to it."[5] To fulfill this mission the church encounters many unique problems in the downtown area.

> The principal difficulty encountered by pastors arises from the relatively short tenure of residence among apartment dwellers. People move frequently. Duration of stay varies from a few months to half a dozen years, and this mobility imposes abnormal limitations upon religious work.
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> No longer does the church have twenty to fifty years of temporal latitude in which to overtake the individual and confront him with the Christian Gospel. Rather, if the religious message is to be communicated at all, it must be imparted within a brief span (a year or two) and mediated essentially to people on the move.[6]

Just how brief this span actually is is further illustrated by the following report on the moving habits of many of the people of Chicago:

> The first of May and the first of October are moving days in Chicago. Whole families play "fruit basket upset." Those on the North side move South, and those on the south side, north.[7]

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[4]Ibid., p. 462.

[5]Vernon Roy Schreiber, "The Urban Church in A Transition Community" (Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1949), p. 41.

[6]Frederick A. Shippey, Church Work in the City (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1952), p. 99.

[7]Kermit Eby, "We Have No Roots", Christian Century, LVIII (August 13, 1941).

In higher grade neighborhoods and among more exclusive apartment dwellers the length of residence is usually much longer; but among the downtown residents who are constantly searching either for better living conditions or lower rent, a rapid rate of population turnover is a foregone conclusion.[8] Even if the pastor had a set pattern which he might use as a guide it would be almost impossible for him to keep up with the changes that are going on.

In addition to the dual constituency with which he has to operate at all times, the pastor in the downtown church will frequently find opportunity to minister to guests who establish temporary residence in nearby hotels or rooming houses.[9] It is often a difficult problem to establish a program which will adequately serve to satisfy the many interests and meet the different levels of intelligence that may be present. The extreme heterogeneity of the group can at times be most baffling.[10]

In the downtown area there are more people packed like sardines per square mile than in any other section of the city.[11] "Often several hundred families live in a single city block."[12]

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[8]Shippey, op. cit., p. 147.

[9]Ibid., p. 97.

[10]Ibid., p. 109.

[11]Ibid., p. 96.

[12]Ibid., p. 147.

> The less money people have the less space they occupy and the more congested must their living conditions grow. Surveys made of the lower East side of New York City have revealed that block by block certain sections show a population of 867.2 persons per acre . . . 35,000 people live within the confines of four square blocks, or as much space as is covered by the campus of Concordia Teacher's College at River Forest.[13]

Within these crowded confines in the downtown area live vast hordes of unmarried men and women; many of them have just come into the city from the open country and for the first time are free from "the traditions and conventions and associations which have been the basis of their round of activities and conduct."[14] For the first time they are away from restraining family influences, and become potential candidates for "compromise with the easier ways to secure a living or to secure satisfaction for a youthful body's demands."[15] And nowhere are the forces of materialism and other evil more active than under these conditions. Crowded down close upon one another they seek diversion and recreation frequently, and find it in movies, race tracks, houses of prostitution, dance halls, road houses and taverns.[16] The vast number of unemployed find much temptation to while away their leisure hours with sinful pleasure. In the face of this opposition

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[13] O. A. Geiseman, "The Urban Church", American Lutheran, XVIII (February, 1935).

[14] Samuel C. Kincheloe, The American City and Its Church (New York: Friendship Press, c.1938), p. 121.

[15] Ibid.

[16] O. A. Geiseman, loc. cit.

the downtown church must strive to win these people. Once the barriers are hurdled these people usually "display a deep appreciation of a pastor's call and satisfaction in knowing that someone in the city has had enough concern to seek them out."[17] But the barriers to be hurdled are many.

One reason the downtown church has trouble experiencing success with these people is because of their low income. They know enough about church to know that participation in the activities of a church often requires a contribution to the treasury which they cannot afford. And rather than be embarrassed they simply stay away.[18] One might suggest that the church carry on some sort of educational program to encourage these people to come even though they cannot contribute financially; but the rapid rate of mobility of the population often does not permit this or any of the usual long-range stewardship training proceedures which we are accustomed to use.[19]

One of the most frequent complaints of the people in the downtown area against the church is that the people are not friendly enough. If the ushers are of the type who exercise prudent reserve until they can ascertain the financial

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[17]Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1952), p. 184.

[18]Ibid., p. 97.

[19]Shippey, op. cit., p. 109.

status of the newcomer, and are able to judge a man's income "by the shape of his nose or the cut of his clothes;" or if the pastor is a man who is proud to think that his membership has always consisted of the better class of people, then perhaps this claim is justified.[20] The importance of showing sincere friendliness to these people is illustrated by the successfulness of Marble Collegiate Church in New York, which is described as

> a down-to-earth downtown church which is succeeding, its leaders believe, because it is a church where one is a stranger but once, where old-fashioned friendliness prevails, where hardly has the stranger put his foot in the door before an usher comes over, smiles and shakes hands as if he meant the warmth of his greeting. The Marble Collegiate is a church where the rich and poor, high and low, "the New York dowager and sailor-boy from California and shop girl from Hackensack" seem all one . . . with the same hopes, fears, aspirations, desires, triumphs, defeats.[21]

It may often be the case that the members are not actually unfriendly, but that they "know one another so well that they unwittingly are cool to chance visitors, and a newcomer must be persistent if he is to become a part of the fellowship."[22] This may especially be true in a church with a foreign language background and with an active bilingual element.[23] The presence of a German sign above the entrance

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[20]David Preisinger, "World or Church", Cresset, XIV (October, 1951).

[21]Blanton, op. cit., p. 422.

[22]Leiffer, op. cit., p. 107.

[23]Ibid.

may actually be warning off the community, and setting the church apart as a foreign element in an American community.[24]

Pastors who were active during the depression years may recall that frequently people who were members of our congregations then hesitated to come to church because they were unable to replace worn out clothing, or felt they could not afford the car fare it would cost them. When one considers how such circumstances are embarrassing to people who already are a part of the group, it becomes easier to understand why this is often a problem in interesting the people of the community in the downtown church.[25]

The downtown church may also find that the people of its community find the traditional form of worship strange and difficult, and thus it may have to adapt its program to meet the circumstances.[26] It "cannot be afraid to discard all patterns or perfunctory routines which have become irrelevant."[27] Development of an adequate program is a complicated matter and a source of continuous difficulty,[28] but churches that neglect to experiment and constantly evaluate the results of its program die "because they seek to be

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[24]"Dying Gracefully", American Lutheran, XVII (August, 1934).

[25]"To Those In Distress", American Lutheran, XVI (January, 1933).

[26]William M. Stieve, "Serving Souls Through the Downtown Church", Today, III (October, 1948).

[27]Shippey, op. cit., p. 103.

[28]Ibid., p. 109.

what they have been, and this they cannot be in a growing city with new populations surrounding them."[29] To overcome this problem and make the unchurched downtown dweller feel more at home some churches have tried movies, services with little or no liturgy, revivalistic type preaching, hymn sings, question periods after regular services, and many other things. Even then the success has not been outstanding and the downtown congregation must constantly be searching for new methods to attract the people within its doors.

While statistics show that apartment dwellers will turn to the pastor of the downtown church in search of aid and relief, and that they are interested in religion, and will respond to pastoral calls and cultivation, the statistics also show that only about two per cent of these people will take the initiative in seeking a church.[30] Very often their traditional church connections are forsworn when they move into such an area because of false pride and sensitiveness.[31] Many people in these areas too regard the church with a cynical attitude, as a racket for the prosperous in which the poor can have no part.[32] Unless our attitude towards them is very sympathetic, and one which attempts to make adjustment

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[29]Kincheloe, op. cit., p. 106.

[30]Shippey, op. cit., p. 144.

[31]"Working on the Fringes", American Lutheran, XVII (December, 1934).

[32]Ibid.

from a non-church-going person to a church-going person as easy as possible, we can not expect to meet with success.[33]

The matter of finances deserves special attention again:

> Just as the city government cannot expect to raise enough money in taxes locally to maintain the essential services in blighted or near-blighted areas, so the church cannot expect these low-income people to finance adequate religious services.[34]

Within the confines of the downtown parish there is much poverty, alcoholism, dependency, delinquency, strained family relationships, and the like. And these needs of the body and mind may often be a serious detriment to the attempt of the church to offer the individual spiritual nourishment.[35] That the church has an obligation to meet these needs no one will deny.

> The example of the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem shows us plainly that the church has a duty toward the whole man. It illustrates the view of the early church that the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked and the sheltering of the needy, was not merely so much giving of relief, but part and parcel of the work of the care of souls. When persons have certain needs which they cannot of themselves supply because of some insufficiency either personal or social, the church must face that challenge and serve the whole man.[36]

Just how the church can administer to these needs, and just

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[33]Herbert Kern, "Movies Draw Them", American Lutheran, XXX (January, 1947).

[34]Leiffer, op. cit., p. 110.

[35]Stieve, op. cit., p. 19.

[36]Virtus Gloe, "The Significance of Social Problems in the Cure of Souls", American Lutheran, XXII (April, 1939).

how much the church can be expected to give for these needs are problems which have to be faced. Downtown churches have often been easy prey for professional tramps and beggars, they are among the first sought out by transient alcoholics seeking money under the ruse that they need food or lodging. Concordia Lutheran Church in Cincinnati maintains a system whereby anyone deemed worthy after a personal interview with the pastor is given a voucher to obtain food at a neighborhood grocery. In cases where greater aid is requested the relief committee of the congregation makes an investigation of the circumstances and decides upon the worthiness of the applicant. Even with these pre-cautionary measures it frequently happens that money, food and clothing are given to individuals who really have no need or who spend it frivolously. In one instance experienced by the writer last year an elderly gentleman appeared at the office asking for money to buy some lunch, was given a voucher for a sum of about one dollar to take to the grocer a few doors away. The next day it was discovered that he had attempted to sell the voucher for cash throughout the neighborhood in order to obtain money for liquor. When such cases are not mere isolated instances, pastors and congregations become even more reluctant and cautious to whom they give aid. When appeals are forthcoming from families living on relief for food and clothing and other support, and these same families are found to be enjoying television and other luxuries in their homes, it is understandable why the church is extremely hesitant in future

cases that come to its attention.

The downtown church has often found that people are responsive to the invitation of the church when they are receiving aid and support, but that as soon as the people are "back on their feet" and self-sufficient again, they forget the church that helped them achieve that position.

Another difficulty that faces the administration of a downtown church in this connection is the ability of the pastor in these situations. His training along these lines has not been so extensive that he can capably cope with every situation that arises. Even if he did have the training, the opportunities are often so numerous that his time does not permit him to deal justly with them. Qualified, trained social workers in these situations might prove to be an important asset, but then the problem arises again as to how they shall be supported.[37]

> Even after the physical needs of food, clothing and shelter have been satisfied, there remains the problem of adequate recreation and the wholesome use of leisure time. Squalid tenements and noisy streets are scarcely the place to spend leisure hours.[38]

Whether or not it is the duty of the church to provide facilities for recreation and pleasure might be debated. Many downtown churches realize that with such facilities they might have greater attraction especially for the younger

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[37]Virtus Gloe, op. cit., p. 9.

[38]Stieve, op. cit., p. 20.

element in the community. Some are able to carry out an extensive program with great success, as for example Christ Church Cathedral in downtown St. Louis.[39] Others find that they are handicapped by inadequate funds, facilities, leaders, and room for expansion. Then, too, the church must always exert caution in the promotion of these activities, remembering that its primary claim to existence is to minister to man's spiritual needs.[40]

The chief source of competition in the downtown area is usually the many storefront churches of a revivalistic nature. Many of these last no longer than the popularity of the man who appoints himself "pastor" of the group and rents the store; and who also takes the collection that is gathered for his own income. Some will always be found, however, which exist for a long period of time and regularly attract a small crowd of people. The congregation has very little if any organization, and the leader rarely possesses adequate formal training either in Bible study or in general education to merit a following.[41] They usually gather for worship in the evenings, have no set patterns which they follow, and are very emotional. Frequently some of these leaders claim that they have the powers to heal; just as frequently they

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[39]Kenneth Underwood, Christianity Where You Live (New York: Friendship Press, c.1945), pp. 107 ff.

[40]Shippey, op. cit., p. 124.

[41]Ibid., p. 107.

gain most of their publicity through their escapades with the law. The activity of Mr. Earl Ivie in Cincinnati in the Spring and summer of 1953 is a case in point. Mr. Ivie began holding revival services in a small rented theatre in a suburban section of Cincinnati, claiming healing powers. As his popularity increased he vacated this location in favor of the larger and centrally located Schubert theatre in downtown Cincinnati. Shortly after this move the newspapers reported that a lawsuit was being brought against him by the owners of the first theatre for several months of unpaid rent that was due them as well as for damages to their property. At the same time he was under investigation by the American Medical Association because of his healing claims, and other lawsuits were catching up with him for similar unpaid bills in other cities where he had been active. When such men are able to draw crowds of thousands of people over long periods of weeks and months they present a real problem and challenge to the downtown church which must be handled with the utmost tact and diplomacy.

CHAPTER V

SOME PROFFERED SOLUTIONS

"A downtown church is successful by virtue of (1) its location; (2) the spirit of its leaders and members; (3) the opportunities it offers."[1] But in almost every American city the general trend among Protestant churches is towards the suburbs.[2] More than anything else the downtown church needs a strategic location, an adequate church plant, effective membership size, a competent church staff, a comprehensive program, denominational teamwork and vital community relations.[3] The first of these is a foregone conclusion; the rest can never be attained if the general trend of the membership is to forsake the area.

Because the churches are business institutions the tendency to move is a natural one when business becomes unprofitable for the budget.[4] Year after year it becomes more expensive to maintain the ancient structure; to remodel or

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[1]Wyndham B. Blanton, The Making of a Downtown Church (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, c. 1945), p. 463.

[2]"Great Churches of America", Christian Century, LXVII (March 22, 1950).

[3]Frederick A. Shippey, Church Work in the City (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1949), pp. 125 ff.

[4]F. A. Hertwig, "Must The Downtown Church Die?", Today, I (February, 1946).

rebuild is deemed unwise because of the expense involved, and also because of the reluctance of some even to remain in the area. The environment is not desirable or does not have the vacant space to expand without much more financial outlay than would be necessary to accomplish the same things in a suburban community. The members must bear the entire burden themselves, without any, or with very little help from the community. Thus they are inclined to regard their position in a neighborhood that is deteriorating physically and socially as something of a tragedy. "The real tragedy lies in the willingness of many a congregation to turn its back on such a community with no thought as to the souls that are still living in that area."[5]

> This problem makes all wonder whether any church is justified in abandoning any area simply because it presents a new challenge and an expensive experiment. It is the tendency of everyone to run away from something difficult particularly if a money outlay is called for. Yet there surely can be no conscience free from doubt about a church that turns its back upon a call of this kind and sends its soul-saving money only where surveys indicate a relatively quick return of invested funds or the establishment of a congregation promising to be quickly self-sustaining.[6]

Regardless of individual preferences and aversions the downtown church too has a message for all men and cannot shirk

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[5]William M. Stieve, "Serving Souls Through the Downtown Church", Today, III (October, 1948).

[6]Ralph Richman, "Church Council Chit-Chat", American Lutheran, XXXVII (March, 1954).

the Great Commission given it in Matthew 28:19-20.[7]

> Our mission policy in this matter must always be that which the Great Mission Director gave the Twelve when He sent them out: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents." Wisdom demands that we never give up a church plant where there are souls to be won for Christ. Wisdom demands that our approach, our method, our technique, be changed to meet changing conditions.[8]

Second Presbyterian Church of Richmond, Virginia, is a glorious example of a church where the proper spirit is in existence:

> Near the church there lies a district of the city known to social workers, the juvenile court and the police as the worst in the city, bringing to its very door an opportunity for the kind of Christian social service work most stimulating to men and women who believe that the church has a mission in the world, a program of redeeming love and service. A hope to meet this social challenge in the neighborhood is one of the reasons no doubt, for the statement Dr. Currie made in 1944 that "The Second Presbyterian Church is going to stand as long as the world stands, and justify its existence through the work it does for Christ, our King."[9]

The downtown church that proposes to abandon its area and relocate must seriously ask itself whether moving actually is the solution to all of its problems.[10] If it has been drawing its membership from all over the city, just where will it go? No matter where it decides to relocate it will still undoubtedly have a goodly portion of its membership

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[7]Vernon Roy Schreiber, "The Urban Church In a Transition Community", (Unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1949), p. 32.

[8]Hertwig, op. cit., p. 7.

[9]Blanton, op. cit., p. 467.

[10]Schreiber, op. cit., p. 30.

scattered.[11] It also faces the problem of suffering considerable financial loss on the sale of the old structure downtown, and the resultant financial weakness generally precludes the purchase of another expensive and strategically located site.[12] It must also consider what its relation to the new environment would be. Perhaps a large percentage of the existing membership will be located around the new site, but "Its relations to its new environment may be relatively slight."[13] An element of the membership of Concordia Church in Cincinnati is inclined to look with hope to the possibility of expanding in a section about three miles from the downtown church, where they have already purchased a large parcel of land and built a new school. Yet there are actually very few of the members living in the area, and the bulk of the membership would still have to travel a long distance even if the church would be relocated here.

The downtown church with plans to relocate also must consider "congregational solidarity in the face of the many occasions for disagreement which a moving proposal brings in its train. Divisions may become so acute as to threaten

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[11] Ibid., p. 31.

[12] H. Paul Douglass, 1000 City Churches (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1926), p. 263.

[13] Ibid.

unity."[14] If not actually a threat to the unity of the congregation, relocation cannot help but leave behind it some embittered members who will not willingly transport themselves to the new location, and may even become antagonistic to the overtures of any church with which they come in contact. Within the same downtown area as Concordia Lutheran Church in Cincinnati there existed also two Evangelical and Reformed churches, both struggling to maintain their existence. When these two amalgamated and relocated more than eight miles away from their former location they left behind quite a few older members who felt for one reason or another that they could not or did not care to travel that distance to church every Sunday. As he encountered them on his calls they frequently voiced their bitterness to the writer against the churches that had forsaken those who had been faithful for many years in favor of a more desirable environment, a younger constituency, and more financial gain.

Relocation may also cause serious tension within the denomination, "for in each of the residential communities other established churches feel, that they have a prerogative."[15]

The downtown church which considers relocation must

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[14]Samuel C. Kincheloe, The American City and Its Church (New York: Friendship Press, c.1938), p. 104.

[15]Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, c.1949), p. 75.

also carefully consider what will become of the people in the neighborhood. While the methodology of the sectarian groups active in the neighborhood seems to be effective in interesting these people, their theology is more often than not sadly lacking. Can the church with a clear conscience simply abandon an area to this type of religion?

Sometimes a church may seem on the verge of collapse, and it may be deemed wise to abandon the area. Yet it may also happen that within a few years changes may occur in the area which warrant the presence of a church again. Some years ago one Detroit church property was sold to the Baptist Union for work among the colored.

> Today our own Berea Church (colored) is trying to find a site and place of worship in this same section of town, where we sold out to the Baptists and where the English District church sold out to the Roman Catholics.[16]

Thus it becomes apparent that the downtown church, its pastor and people, will want to be most subjective in viewing the future.

> Its people will want to educate themselves to the peculiar exigencies of their situation, to realize what they are, what their church is, what it stands for, what its opportunities are and how they can be achieved. This downtown church will glory in its position and opportunities. It will not apologize or feel sorry for itself, nor think its day is done. It will study to know itself, to inform its people, to inspire them and to make them a proud people. It will repeatedly take stock of itself, survey and resurvey its territory, seeking to discover where its labors are having telling

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[16]Hertwig, op. cit., p. 5.

> effect and where they are not, and steering its course accordingly. It will want strong and aggressive leaders and it will instrument them with the means to carry out their joint purposes. It will realize that such a job as theirs demands largeness and vision, handsome contributions in money, and, above all, personal service.[17]
>
> The more difficult procedure, but the only one which will assure the continued vitality of a church, is constant recruiting of new members from the local area and orientating the program toward them.[18]

And a church can successfully build up its membership with a dual consistency, and have the two groups function harmoniously in the work of the church and its social activities as well:

> Between the original central business section of a northwestern city and the extensive grounds of the state capitol was once a desirable residential neighborhood in which many central churches clustered. With the expansion of business, it has now become an area of depreciated property and handicapped human fortunes. While the cities of the northwest lack the overwhelming foreign populations of the eastern seaboard, their poorer districts contrive to gather mostly motley elements. In this case they include the poorer types of Irish and Swedes, with considerable numbers of Italians, Hebrews and some Negroes, who now occupy this once aristocratic quarter.
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> The church still has a thousand members, scattered widely, but the pastor says frankly that what he wants most from the distant ones is that they help to pay the bills. The church primarily exists for and proposes to build itself up out of the people of the immediate vicinity.
>
> A careful inventory has been taken of the sound elements of the present population. First, there are young professional and business people, frequently unmarried. They are well educated and in every way promising, though their present income is small and they have to live in inexpensive surrounding. Secondly, there are stranded families of culture and good stock, many

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[17] Blanton, op. cit., p. 471.

[18] Leiffer, op. cit., p. 99.

> of them clinging to their depreciated property. Among them are many widows. Then there are incoming rural elements. The farmer in the Northwest has never paid carfare, and he never proposes to. When, therefore, he moves to the city, he very frequently establishes himself within walking distance of the business center and puts up with poor living conditions that come within his scale of expenditure. All these classes are promising material for the church except from the financial standpoint.
>
> The present service of the church is designed first of all to mold these diverse elements into a fellowship by creating a community consciousness. There is a weekly community evening, including spirited community singing, moving pictures and a social hour. Transients coming into the neighborhood are helped to find homes through a rooming-house bureau. There are classes in industrial and craft work. The church systematically cooperates with the Juvenile Court. The Goodwill Industries and day nursery are located immediately across the street and the church is closely associated with their work. Its active daily vacation Bible school in a recent period enrolled 80 Italians and 90 Jewish children. Athletics are carefully organized and the church actively participates in an interchurch athletic league. All this is in addition to the work of a well-organized traditional family church.
>
> This is an excellent example of cooperation between a church that, in spite of its weakened condition, has residual ability and leadership of its own and socially minded forces both within and outside of the city. Together they are effectively meeting a changing urban situation by a clear-cut policy and suitably adapted program.[19]

If the two constituencies are so distinct from one another it might be feasible to maintain them as separate congregations using the same facilities. They might hold different services, be served by different staffs, operate on different budgets and have different organizations. This might be done in the hope that eventually the two constituencies "will tend to fuse and develop a new and broader

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[19]H. Paul Douglass, op. cit., p. 266-267.

basis of fellowship."[20]

Perhaps the answer to some of the problems lies in our educational system. It may be that our men are not prepared adequately to handle the situations that confront them.

> Our educational system has not been training men specifically for work among such people. Since the majority of our churches are in and, therefore, the majority of our people from, middle-class society; it is likely that the majority of both faculty and students in our schools are also from the middle classes. This would mean that the pervading psychology in our educational institutions is that of middle-class society. To effectively work among any class of people one must thoroughly understand them. Could it perhaps be that our colleges and seminaries are not producing men who understand the lower classes of our urban society?[21]

Another way in which we might achieve more success in interesting the people of the community to become church-going people, and at the same time put forth an effort towards integrating the dual constituency, would be to have more frequent social functions to which would be invited the children and parents of the neighborhood as well as the families of the congregation.[22]

It may be too that the situation in the downtown church calls for a complete revision of our usual mission methods as well as an adaptation of our usual forms of worship to conform more with what these people have become accustomed

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[20]Schreiber, op. cit., p. 43.

[21]Marcus Lang, "The Communities and Church Progress of St. Louis Lutheran Churches", American Lutheran, XXIX (July, 1946).

[22]C. T. Schuknecht, "The Old School in a New Day", Today, I (October, 1946).

to. The downtown church may have to be satisfied if only it can preach, teach, and administer the sacraments to as many as it can, whether it be for a shorter or longer period of time.[23] This revision of methods might involve some adaptations commonly used by the tabernacle evangelist.

> This man hires a hall or puts up a big tabernacle, usually out of plain boards. He may even use a large tent. He believes in using variety of means to get the people to come to his tabernacle. Usually there is a bit of showmanship and he goes heavy on crowd psychology. A good evangelist carries newspaper excerpts. He employs radio plugs, uses handbills, dodgers and maybe a ballyhoo car. He gets the people out to give them a message. If that message is not what it should be all the way through, it is his theology that is faulty, not his methodology of getting at the people.[24]

It may mean the development of more missions along the lines of the Cleveland Gospel Center, with its simple appointments, evening evangelistic services, no high-pressure coaxing and individual interviews.[25]

In order to relieve the huge burden which lies on the shoulders of the pastor of the downtown church, Synod must certainly continue to supply these pastors with assistance when they are also asked to serve in synodical capacities. And it might go beyond this point. There are many who believe that synodical social services ought to be increased

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[23] "The Other City Once More", American Lutheran, XXIII (July, 1940).

[24] A. C. Meier, "Your Old Men Shall Dream Dreams, Your Young Men Shall See Visions", American Lutheran, XXVI (May, 1943).

[25] H. K. Platzer, "The Gospel Center", American Lutheran, XXII (May, 1939).

in close cooperation with the congregations which are operating in the blighted and downtown slum areas.[26]

Up to now Synod's policy regarding the downtown church has been one of "indifference and gross neglect."[27] A few districts have taken action. "The Western District subsidizes at least one such church by helping the school."[28] And "the Michigan District has recently purchased the entire plant of seventy-year old St. Peter's Church in Detroit."[29]

> It should be clear by now that this is a problem to be met by a regional federation of churches, the district or by synod itself. By the time the live or die stage in the downtown church is reached, the financial resources of those who still attend it may be below the requirement for making a new effort with a different population and environment.
>
> Would it not be possible for one or more of the districts or synod to take hold of one of these downtown parishes and by example show how there too the Word of God will not return void?[30]

The city is becoming more and more important to the church with each passing year, and within the city itself the downtown area becomes more strategic. "He does most to Christianize America who does most to Christianize her cities, he does most to Christianize her cities who does most to Christianize the downtown districts."[31]

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[26] Hertwig, op. cit., p. 8.

[27] Ibid., p. 6.

[28] Ibid., p. 7.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Richman, loc. cit.

[31] Blanton, op. cit., p. 461.

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